The cess amount has been increased approximately three folds to the original amount in 1992 for this purpose.

4. The State Governments have been requested to enhance the budgetary provisions of the respective State Pollution Control Boards and to allow them to create new posts for effective functioning.

5. A study has also been conducted by the Administrative Staff College, Hyderabad on the strengthening of the Pollution Control Boards. The report has been prepared based on a detailed study of four Pollution Control Boards namely Gujarat, Maharastra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. The salient features of the report inter-alia are:

(i) suggestions have been made for policy changes like preparation of Annual Environmental Quality Report by Pollution Control Boards (PCBs) transforming the reglatory focus to technical competence focus in the PCBs Preparation of comprehensive programmes for pollution control have been proposed involving pollution source inventorisation, pollution control plans etc., by PCBs. Operational changes have been suggested in functioning of the State.

(ii) The strengthening of infrastructure in terms of technical manpower and equipment of the State Pollution Control Boards have been suggested.

(iii) The role of Central Pollution Control Board and other agencies have been mentioned with respect to providing technical support including human resource development.

(iv) Introduction of mass standards, preparation of area specific environment plans, inventorisation of pollution source, hazardous waste management etc., are some of the major areas for development.

Area Covered by Forests

1121. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that the area covered by forests in India is 64 million ha. i.e. 19.47% of the country land out of which 31 million ha. consists of degraded forests; and

(b) if so, whether there is any programme to increase the density of these degraded forests?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ) (a) As per State of Forest Report, 1995, the forest cover in the country is 63.96 million ha. i.e. 19.46% of the geographical area, out of which 24.93 million ha. consists of degraded forests.

(b) Following programmes are undertaken for increasing the density of forests: (i) Extensive afforestation programmes are undertaken by State Governments from their own resources as well as with financial assistance from Government of India for afforestation, protection of forests and restoration of ecological balance;

(ii) Various Externally Aided projects in the forestry sector are being implemented for increasing the density of degraded forests;

(iii) Guidelines have been issued to all the State Governments to involve village communities for the regeneration of degraded forests through Joint Forest Management.

National Forestry Action Plan

1122. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a National Forestry Action Plan with the assistance of UNDP and FAO was signed in June 1993; and

(b) if so, what are the results achieved so far?